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Letter dated 13 November 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to the letter of the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations, Ambassador Slobodan Tašovski, dated 6 November 2008, I wish to state that the allegations contained therein are totally baseless.

The military parade in Thessaloniki has been organized every year, on 28 October, since the liberation of Greece from the Nazi occupation, to commemorate the resistance of the Greek people to the military aggression of the Axis Powers during the Second World War. This year, upon the invitation of the Greek Defence Minister, Evangelos Meimarakis, the event was attended by his colleagues and Deputy Defence Ministers of the neighbouring countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Their presence conveyed a powerful and symbolic message of regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations, a solid basis for peace and stability in South-Eastern Europe.

The Minister of Defence of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia declined the invitation, informing his Greek counterpart that he could not attend because of unexpected commitments.

I wish to stress that an official protest by a third party over the organization of a military parade on the commemoration of the Greek resistance against the Axis Powers during the Second World War is unprecedented.

The customary slogans heard during these parades always reflect the celebrated occasion and are not directed against any country.

The whole question, as you may understand, is very sensitive and of great importance to the population of Thessaloniki, and of the northern Greek region of Macedonia.

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I wish to underline that the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has adopted an increasingly intransigent stance in the negotiations under United Nations auspices over the name issue and is always ready to blame Greece for its failings and shortcomings, as was the case recently, with regard to its relations with NATO and the European Union.

Let me state very clearly that Greece remains committed to reaching a speedy solution to the name issue, in order to improve neighbourly relations, enhance regional security and promote bilateral cooperation between our two countries. We have always said that such development would be in the interest of all concerned.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 83, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) John **Mourikis**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative